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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 004228

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2015

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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY ZOELLICK'S MAY 20 MEETING WITH KING ABDULLAH OF JORDAN

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (U) Friday, May 20, 2005, 1:30 p.m., King Hussein Convention Center, Dead Sea, Jordan.

2. (U) Participants:

U.S.

The Deputy Secretary
Executive Assistant to the Deputy Secretary Ross Wilson
Embassy Amman Charge d'Affaires David Hale (notetaker)
Farah Pandith (NSC)

Jordan

King Abdullah II
Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein
Royal Court Minister Marwan Muasher
Finance Minister Bassem Awadallah
Foreign Minister Farouq Qasrawi
Jordanian Ambassador to the U.S. Karim Kavar

REFORM AND PROMOTING MODERATE ISLAM

3. (C) The Deputy Secretary reviewed the state-of-play in overall BMENA activities, and in that context praised Jordan's work in educational reform, the promotion of Islam's message of tolerance, and political decentralization. He encouraged the King to consult with Malaysian PM Badawi, whose "Islam Hedari" initiative to start a broader debate about modern Islamic civilization seemed to parallel Jordan's "Amman message." The King agreed on the value of coordination, and looked forward to a July conference in Amman that will broaden engagement in the Amman message to include non-Arab Muslim groups, including in southeast Asia, an area, especially in Thailand, where he saw dangerous extremist trends. He pointed to Singapore, which he had recently visited, as a model of progressive thinking. The King particularly admired how Singapore's educational curriculum promoted interfaith tolerance, and said he would include it as part of the Amman message process.

SUDAN

4. (C) The Deputy Secretary, noting King Abdullah's contacts in Sudan, reviewed U.S. efforts and recent developments. The Deputy Secretary outlined in brief our next diplomatic steps, including his plans for a June visit to meet first Vice President Taha. The King acknowledged that because of his excellent relations with the Sudanese government, he had been asked many times to intercede on their behalf with the U.S. However, he did not believe they had reached a point of transparent motivations; until they were sincere, he said he has told them, he would not get in the middle diplomatically. Jordan was prepared to contribute peacekeepers in the south; Jordan's positive experience in Croatia and East Timor demonstrated that Jordanian troops could help even in areas of Muslim/Christian conflict.

IRAQ

5. (C) The Deputy Secretary recounted his May 19 visit to Iraq, where he was impressed by the rich potential of the country and the courage and conviction of its new leaders. The insurgency, having failed to stop the elections, now was targeting the constitutional process and seeking to stimulate sectarian violence. However, despite some resistance in the UIA, sincere efforts were underway to bring Sunni figures into the political process. The Deputy Secretary knew Jordan would continue to use its ties to the Sunni community to help. He also stressed the need for more Muslim voices to condemn Zarqawi's indiscriminate murder and outrageous statements. The King said the U.S. could count on Jordan's continual cooperation.

PALESTINIAN BADR BRIGADE

6. (C) The King raised the Badr Brigade, a Palestinian security unit trained by the Jordanians but never deployed in the West Bank as intended. He said Shimon Peres had explained to him that Israel now opposed their deployment because of concern that these outsiders could generate tensions within the existing security elements. The King

observed that President Abbas remained supportive of their deployment, and should be a better judge than the Israelis of their impact on other units.

DEBT RELIEF AND GULF STATES OIL GRANTS

17. (C) Finance Minister Awadallah expressed gratitude for U.S. supplemental assistance and outlined Jordan's fiscal challenges in familiar terms. Oil price rises have added \$255 million annually to the budget bill; Jordan needs help from the Saudis and others to meet its oil needs while reducing its use of subsidies and dependence on oil aid over a three year period. Jordan also needed help to further reduce its debt burden. Beyond raising the debt swap ceiling from 30 to 50%, Jordan sought cancellation of 80% of its debt. World Bank and IMF leaders attending the World Economic Forum had said a case could be made for debt relief based on oil price shock. Awadallah hoped language helpful to Jordan could be inserted in the Gleneagles G-8 summit communiqué. The Deputy Secretary acknowledged that Jordan faced a difficult fiscal challenge and asked for further background information. On oil assistance, the Deputy Secretary noted the President had encouraged Saudi Crown

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Prince Abdullah to help during their Crawford meeting, and we would continue to urge support from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE.

SYRIA

18. (C) Turning to Syria, the King said he and Prime Minister Jaafari were in agreement with the U.S. on the continued flow of insurgents from there to Iraq. Syria was playing the same old game. The Deputy Secretary stressed the need to maintain international pressure on Syria. The King agreed, and said he understood that in coordination with the President, Crown Prince Abdullah had delivered a tough message to Bashar al-Asad during the Saudi's recent visit to Damascus.

19. (U) This cable has been cleared by the Deputy Secretary.

110. (U) Minimize considered.

HALE